

Message Text

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ACTION SS-25

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FM AMEMBASSY PARIS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 0789

C O N F I D E N T I A L PARIS 16750

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: CASC, PFOR, CG, TZ, US

SUBJECT: KIDNAPPED AMERICAN STUDENTS BEING HELD HOSTAGE
IN ZAIRE

1. EMBASSY POLITICAL COUNSELOR RECEIVED CALL FRIDAY AFTERNOON FROM PROFESSOR HERBERT WEISS OF BROOKLYN COLLEGE WHO IS CURRENTLY BASED IN BRUSSELS FOR A RESEARCH PROJECT ON ZAIRE. WEISS WAS CALLING ON BEHALF OF BELGIAN POLITICAL SCIENTIST BENOIT VERHAGEN WHO IS WELL KNOWN FOR HIS RESEARCH AND SCHOLARLY PUBLICATIONS ON ZAIRE. VERHAGEN HAS BEEN ASKED BY STANFORD UNIVERSITY REPRESENTATIVES (WHO WERE NOT NAMED) TO INTERVENE IN THE TANZANIAN KIDNAPING CASE AND GO TO BARAKA IN EASTERN ZAIRE TO NEGOTIATE WITH THE KIDNAPERS. VERHAGEN HAD APPARENTLY BEEN ASKED TO TAKE ON THIS ASSIGNMENT WHEN THE STUDENTS WERE FIRST TAKEN HOSTAGE, BUT WAS THEN ASKED TO REFRAIN FROM ANY ACTION WHILE "OFFICIAL" ATTEMPTS WERE MADE TO SAVE THE STUDENTS. IT IS VERHAGEN'S FEELING THAT IF STANFORD IS AGAIN ASKING HIM TO INTERVENE, OTHER EFFORTS HAVE COME TO A STANDSTILL.

2. VERHAGEN IS DEPARTING BRUSSELS FOR KINSHASA LATE SATURDAY AFTERNOON. HE HAS APPOINTMENT WITH MOBUTU ON MONDAY. WHAT HE WOULD LIKE FROM US IS A READING ON MOBUTU'S INTENTIONS IN THIS MATTER? IS MOBUTU
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LIKELY TO REFRAIN FROM ANY INTERFERENCE IN NEGOTIATIONS,

OR IS HE LIKELY TO TRY AND FIND A WAY TO STOP A LARGE SUM OF MONEY FROM BEING PASSED TO THE REBELS EVEN IF THE SAFETY OF BOTH STUDENTS AND NEGOTIATORS WOULD OTHERWISE BE ENDANGERED. VERHAGEN IS QUITE WILLING TO TRY AND WALK INTO THE REBEL CAMP TO NEGOTIATE BUT HE WOULD ALSO LIKE OUR ADVISE AS TO THE DESIRABILITY OF HIS DOING THIS.

3. WEISS CAN BE REACHED AT BRUSSELS TELEPHONE 513-7241. VERHAGEN CAN BE REACHED AT BRUSSELS TELEPHONE 767-4625. CALL WAS MADE TO EMBASSY POLCOUNSELOR BECAUSE OF PAST ASSOCIATION WITH ZAIRE IN DEPARTMENT. RESPONSE CAN BE MADE THROUGH THIS CHANNEL, BUT IN VIEW OF OPEN NATURE OF TELEPHONE COMMUNICATIONS, DEPARTMENT MAY WISH TO TRANSMIT REPLY VIA EMBASSY BRUSSELS, REPEATING FOREGOING TO BRUSSELS AND TO OTHER POSTS AS DESIRED.
RUSH

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